TO THE READER.

In offering this Portfolio, I will suppose that most of my readers have read my 'Notes of Travels for Eight Years amongst the North American Indians,' published by myself, some time since, with more than 300 outline illustrations: that work having now reached the fifth edition, has been extensively read; and I trust the public will pardon me for placing before them this Preface, as an introduction of myself, and of the customs herein described.

I was born in Wyoming, in North America, some thirty or forty years since, of parents who entered that beautiful and famed valley soon after the close of the revolutionary war, and the disastrous event of the Indian Massacre. The early part of my life was whiled away, apparently in vain, with books reluctantly held in one hand and a rifle or fishing-pole firmly and affectionately grasped in the other.

At the urgent request of my father, who was professionally a lawyer, I was prevailed upon to abandon these favorite themes, and also my occasional dabblings with the brush, which had already secured a corner in my affections; and I commenced reading the Law for a profession, under the direction of Reeve and Gould, of Connecticut. I attended the lectures of these learned judges for two years, was admitted to the bar, and practised the Law, as a sort of Nimrodic lawyer, in my native valley, for two or three years, when I deliberately sold my law library and all (save my rifle and fishing-tackle), and, converting their proceeds into brushes and paint-pots, I commenced the art of painting in Philadelphia, without teacher or adviser.

I there closely applied my hand to the labours of my new vocation for several years, during which time my mind was continually reaching for some new branch or enterprise of the art, on which to devote a lifetime of enthusiasm, when a delegation of some ten or fifteen noble and dignified-looking Indians from the wilds of the "Far West" suddenly arrived in the city, arrayed and equipped in all their classic beauty; with "shield and helmet," with "tunic and manteau," tinted and tasselled off exactly for the painter's palette. In silent and stoic dignity these Lords of the Forest strutted about the city for a few days, wrapped in their pictured robes; their brows plumed with the quills of the war-eagle, attracting the gaze and admiration of all who beheld them. After this they took their leave for Washington city, and I was left to reflect and regret, which I did long and deeply, until I was brought to the following deductions and conclusions. "Black and blue cloth and civilization are destined not only to veil "but to obliterate the grace and beauty of Nature. Man, in the simplicity and loftiness of his nature, unrestrained and unfettered "by the disguises of art, is surely the most beautiful model for the painter; and the country from which he hails is unquestionably "the best school of the Arts in the world, and such I am sure, from the models I have seen, is the wilderness of America. The "history and customs of such a people, preserved by pictorial illustrations, are themes worthy the lifetime of one man, and "nothing short of the loss of my life shall prevent me from visiting their country and becoming their historian."

There was something inexpressibly delightful in this resolution, which was to bring me amidst such living models for my brush; and at the same time to place in my hands again, for my living and protection, as well as amusement, the favorite objects of my heart, which had long been laid by to rust and decay in the city, without the remotest apparent prospect of again contributing to my enjoyment.

I had fully resolved; I opened my views to my friends and relations, but found not one advocate or abettor: I tried fairly and faithfully, but it was in vain to reason with those whose anxieties were ready to fabricate every difficulty and danger that could be imagined, without being able to understand or appreciate the extent or importance of my designs; and I broke from them all,—from my wife and my aged parents; being myself my only adviser and protector.

With these views firmly fixed, armed, equipped, and supplied, I started out in the year 1832, and penetrated the vast and pathless wilds which are familiarly denominated "The Great Far West" of the American continent, over the almost boundless Prairies and through the Rocky Mountains, with a light heart, inspired with an enthusiastic hope and reliance that I could meet and overcome all the hazards and privations of a life devoted to the production of a literal and graphic delineation of the living